

October 22, 1999

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Ms. Jane Henney
Commissioner, FDA
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Ms. Henney

I have a disease called Celiac Sprue. This inherited disease does not allow me to consume any particle of wheat, oats, barley or rye or any of their derivatives in any form. Gluten in any form can be a killer to me and potentially to my closest blood relatives. My grain staples of life are basically corn, rice and soybeans. This is a severe medical condition and if the offending grains are consumed, over a period of time, it can result in intestinal cancer and death. It is widely believed that 1 in 250 people in the U.S. may have this disease and not know it. It is frequently misdiagnosed as Irritable Bowel Syndrome or some other more easily recognized bowel or intestinal problem.

The reason I am writing you today is to voice loudly my opposition to the practice of genetically engineering grains. It is the fear of the celiac community that our "safe" grains become contaminated genetically by the "offending" grains that we cannot and must not consume. There are thousands of celiacs across the U.S. that are diagnosed and many, many more who are not that are/should be greatly concerned with the dangers this practice could cause to our health.

It is in celiacs' best health interest that explicit labeling be included on ALL products produced and distributed in the U.S. We have to be so very careful in purchasing any product because of what may be added that is not listed. Our offending grains are often used as "stabilizers," "thickeners" or to help keep a product "free flowing." Ingestion of gluten, no matter how minute, is a severe health danger to us.

Please pass this information on to whoever might have jurisdiction over this practice and stress the importance of keeping a corn, soybean or rice grain just that — corn, soybean and rice with no other grains added genetically to "enhance flavor," "resist disease or pests," or any other reason the grains' DNA may be altered.

This is a matter of thousands of people's health and no other. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,



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